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We should all be concerned by the high rate of obesity in Indiana, which puts Hoosiers at greater risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and other serious health problems. As the 10th most obese state in the nation, our health care system and economy are overburdened. In 2003, we spent \$1.64 billion in Indiana for obesity-related health care alone. This economic burden falls on all of us. Hoosiers need to make some lifestyle changes to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and reduce the economic toll associated with being overweight or obese. Your body weight is a controllable factor. Why not start out this New Year by making a commitment to eat more fruits and vegetables every day, consume less sugary foods and drinks and be more physically active every week. Nothing is more important to your family and friends than having you live a long and healthy life, and maintaining a health weight is essential to making that a reality.

More Fruits and Vegetables...

You may find it a challenge to eat the recommended nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day, but it *is* possible. Changing your focus in grocery shopping can become easier with practice. Understanding portion sizes is the first step to achieving the “eat 9” goal each day. For example, one serving of a vegetable or a fruit is only half a cup. Combine three or four colorful vegetables in a salad and you achieve 4 of the 9 recommended servings. Eat a large apple as a snack, and you add 3 more servings to the day. Most importantly, each time you make choices for your meals or snacks, let your first thought be, “did I eat my 9 today and how can I add one more?” Teach this behavior to your children and it can lead to a lifetime of healthy eating!

Less sweets...

Enjoying an occasional snack high in sugar is okay. However, sugar is hidden in many of the foods that we eat on a day-to-day basis. For example, two tablespoons of ketchup contain two teaspoons of sugar. Allowing yourself one sweet treat each day in addition to consuming foods already high in sugar, may result in added calories and weight gain. The added sugar calories and weight gain may also lead to major health issues such as type 2 diabetes. Check the labels on the packaged foods you eat. Sugar can be listed as many different names such as lactose, glucose, maltose, or corn syrup. Learn which foods and drinks have high amounts of sugar and consume these less often *and* in smaller portions. Experiment how to prepare food with less sugar or better yet, use a sugar substitute whenever possible. Finally, commit to make low sugar choices when you eat away from home.

More Movement...

Today’s technology makes it easier for us to be sedentary. Most Americans spend large portions of our day sitting in front of a computer and/or television and riding in automobiles. For 2008, make a conscious effort to walk more each day. Get up from your desk more often, limit the time you and your family spend in front of the television, and take the stairs every chance you can. Once you are comfortable adding more activity to your week, aim to get the recommended 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. This level of physical activity will help you feel better, have more energy, and be more productive.

By following these three simple prescriptions in 2008 to eat more fruits and veggies, reduce sugary foods and beverages, and be more active each day, by 2009 you will be in much better shape to be healthy.

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